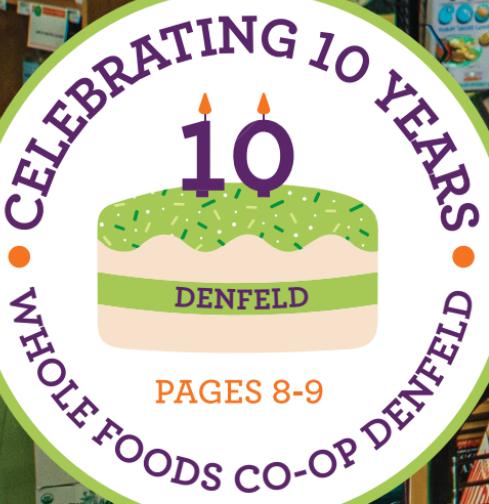


WHOLE FOODS CO-OP

garbanzo

gazette

WINTER 2026



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

10

DENFELD

PAGES 8-9

WHOLE FOODS CO-OP DENFELD





Sarah Hannigan
General Manager

Small Change Making Big Change

Happy New Year!

Happy New Year! I'm thrilled to kick off 2026 by celebrating the incredible milestone we reached together this past December: Whole Foods Co-op shoppers have donated over \$1 million through the GIVE! Round-up at the register program!

That's \$1 million in small change making big changes for our community. Since 2017, we've invited shoppers to round up their purchases to support a different nonprofit or initiative each month. Time and again, you've answered with a resounding "YES!" And each of those little acts of generosity has added up to something truly remarkable.

I'm humbled by the impact of your donations, 100% of which the Co-op has passed through to programs that support community, grow local food systems, and expand food access. Thank you!

Through our Community Support Program, your small change has fueled the work of more than 50 nonprofits across our region. Together, we've supported food access through organizations like Chum, Damiano Center, and

Duluth Farm to School; provided vital services for vulnerable neighbors through groups like PAVSA, CASDA, and First Witness; uplifted diversity and inclusion with initiatives of Family Freedom Center, American Indian

Community Housing Organization, and the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial; and stewarded the environment with partners such as St. Louis River Alliance, Hartley Nature Center, and Friends of Sax-Zim Bog.

Looking ahead, Owners have elected a new slate of nine nonprofits to receive round up donations in 2026. You can learn more about them on page 4, and I hope you'll continue to support their important work by rounding up this year.

Your round-up donations have also strengthened our local food system through the Grow Local Food Fund. Grants have helped farmers and food producers repair barns, build fences, invest in equipment, and grow capacity for food businesses across the region. We were thrilled to follow up with 2025 grant recipients and learn more about their projects, highlighted on pages 6-7.

Note, applications for 2026 Grow Local Food Fund grants are open throughout January! Please share with your networks! Also, we're also inviting Owners to apply to join the committee that helps select recipients. Details are on page 6.

Finally, your round-up donations have supported Whole Foods Co-op's Fran Skinner Memorial Matching Fund and the Access Discount program, which make shopping at the Co-op more affordable for Owners of limited means. These initiatives lower barriers to ownership and make local, quality food more accessible to everyone.

I'm also filled with gratitude for all of the employees who have been instrumental in reaching this milestone, especially the cashiers who ask if people would like to round up at the registers over and over, day after day. They are the true shepherds of all of this change making!

Thank you for rounding up. Thank you for believing that small change can make a big difference. I can't wait to see the impact we'll continue to make, one little round up at a time. 🌶

In cooperation and connection,

Sarah Hannigan, General Manager

gm@wholefoods.coop

GIVE!

**GROW LOCAL
FOOD FUND**

**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**Tristen Eberling**

Vice President

Looking Ahead to 2026

We hope you enjoyed celebrating 55 years of local food and growing community connections at our Annual Owner Meeting as much as we did this past October. It was wonderful connecting with so many of you! Thank you for embracing both the new location at Ursa Minor Brewing and this year's updated meeting format. My fellow Directors and I will use what we learned to help shape and improve next year's gathering.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to our new board members, Molly Bradfish and Brittany Lind Libby. Their community engagement, diverse skills, and forward-thinking perspectives make them valuable additions to the Board. The Board and I are excited to incorporate them into the Co-op's 2026 initiatives.

Are you thinking of getting more involved at Whole Foods Co-op? We are currently looking for board members for the next term! Feel free to reach out to the Board (wholefoods.coop/contact) if you have any questions. As always, the monthly board meetings are also open to Co-op owners interested in seeing what it's all about.

In the new year, we're looking ahead to another year of continued growth, innovation, and community partnership through the Co-op's various initiatives, including through guiding the Co-op through our updated Ends Policy, which was adopted in June 2025: *With Whole Foods Co-op, our community is better connected, our food system is resilient, and our regional economy is thriving.*

Although we cannot predict what the new year will bring, some things are for certain, and that's the Co-op's commitments to supporting our community, to expanding local food initiatives, and providing meaningful support to our selected GIVE! register round-up recipients, both through the Community Support Program and the Grow Local Food Fund.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish you a warm, cozy winter and a very happy new year. 🎉

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!**MOLLY BRADFISH**

"I enjoy sharing a sense of guardianship for a community and seeing how things work."

**BRITTANY LIND LIBBY**

"The Co-op enriches our community daily, and I want to further that mission through board service."

**AMBER SCHLATER**

President
Term expires 2027

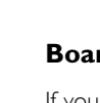
**BRITTANY LIND LIBBY**

Term expires 2028

**TRISTEN EBERLING**

Vice President

Term expires 2026

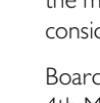
**ROBIN PESTALOZZI**

Term expires 2026

**CHRIS LEE**

Secretary

Term expires 2026

**SCOTT VAN DAELE**

Term expires 2027

**SUSAN DARLEY-HILL**

Treasurer

Term expires 2026

**MOLLY BRADFISH**

Term expires 2028

**MARIA ISLEY**

Term expires 2026

Board Meetings
If you have an item for discussion at Board meetings, please submit your item in writing by the first Friday of the month requesting the Board's consideration.

Board meetings are at 5:30pm on the 4th Monday of every month, subject to change due to holidays and Co-op events.

Learn more at wholefoods.coop/wfc-board

GIVE! COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Whole Foods Co-op is pleased to announce another exciting year of our GIVE! round up at the register program. Thank you for supporting this incredible community program by rounding up!

MEET THE 2026 GIVE! COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM RECIPIENTS

Every month, a different nonprofit or cause is the focus of our round-up program. Nine of the nonprofits were chosen by our Owners during our annual election. Funds raised during these months will be split 50/50 between the nonprofit and the Grow Local Food Fund (noted by *).

Chum, a legacy partner, as well as the Whole Foods Co-op Fran Skinner Memorial Matching Fund and Whole Foods Co-op Access Discount Program, both assisting Whole Foods Co-op Owners of limited means, will receive 100% of donations during their designated months.

JANUARY*

Mentor North

Offers community-based, one-on-one mentoring opportunities for youth across the Twin Ports. Funds will be used to match more youth with mentors and to support those waiting to be matched.

FEBRUARY

Whole Foods Co-op Fran Skinner Memorial Matching Fund

Established in 1991, the fund assists people in purchasing equity stock for Co-op Ownership. Funds will help fellow community members of limited means become Co-op Owners.

MARCH

Chum + Minnesota FoodShare

Provides emergency shelter, food, and street outreach throughout Duluth. Donations will support Chum through the Minnesota FoodShare initiative, an annual giving campaign that addresses food insecurity education and awareness.

APRIL*

Duluth Community Garden Program

With 18 garden sites across the city, they provide land, infrastructure, and support for communities to grow food together. Funds will be used to improve garden plots.

MAY*

Justice North

Provides free legal help to people who can't afford an attorney for important non-criminal issues. Funds will be used to increase capacity and serve more community members.

JUNE

Whole Foods Co-op Access Discount Program

Reduces cost barriers by giving Co-op Owners enrolled in food assistance programs a 10% discount on purchases. In FY 2025, the Co-op Access Discount provided \$113,084 in savings to 606 individuals and families with limited means.

JULY*

Duluth Center for Women and Children

Creates opportunities for children living in poverty to grow up to live secure, productive lives, supports quality childcare and education, and promotes economic stability. Funds will help supplement compensation for women who plan, procure, and assemble free meal kits for households experiencing food insecurity.

AUGUST*

Union Gospel Mission

Serves as a safe place for those experiencing homelessness by providing hot meals, hygiene supplies, and a welcoming space. Funds will be used to provide hot, nutritious meals to people experiencing homelessness.

SEPTEMBER*

Duluth Folk School

Offers hands-on classes in sustainable living, food skills, conservation and traditional crafts, and partners with local artists and organizations to provide accessible programs for learning and community connection. Funds will be used to support and expand classes, workshops, and gatherings.

OCTOBER*

Safe Haven

Provides a 24-7 Crisis Shelter and a Downtown Resource Center offering safety, basic needs, and advocacy for survivors of domestic violence. Funds will be used to provide food, bedding and essentials for shelter residents, helping over 2,000 survivors annually.

NOVEMBER*

Chester Bowl Improvement Club

Helps people enjoy the outdoors year-round through ski and snowboard programs, summer day camp, and community events. Funds will be used to support the Scholarship Program, which helps more children and families learn to ski, snowboard, and enjoy camp.

DECEMBER*

Duluth YMCA

Strengthens community through programs supporting youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Funds will be used to support the Y's Food Access Program, providing healthy snacks and meals to children in after-school and summer programs, as well as to provide meal kits for families in need.



Because of you, our shoppers, we are pleased to share that we have raised over \$1 million for local nonprofits, programs for Co-op Owners of limited means, and local farmers and producers in our area. It's change making change in our communities!

WINTER CO-OP CLASSES & EVENTS

JANUARY

Bowl-d Flavors

Aleia Greene

Tuesday, January 27 • 5pm - 7pm

📍 Hillside • \$15*

Discover Bowl-d Flavors! We'll make a flavorful stew of chickpeas, hearty greens, and a surprising ingredient. Come prepared to whip up a batch of your own, and then we'll talk through a few ways to make this soup more versatile.

FEBRUARY



Winter Skincare with evanhealey

Kirsten Hayman of evanhealey

Wednesday, February 4 • 6pm - 7:30pm

📍 Hillside • \$10

In this hands-on class, attendees will learn about skincare products and techniques to effectively cleanse and replenish moisture during the harsh winter months. Participants will also take home a complimentary personal skincare kit.

All participants will receive a \$10 Co-op gift card. Must attend class to receive gift card and complimentary kit.

Kids in the Kitchen featuring DAI

Whole Foods Co-op & Duluth Arts Institute

Saturday, February 7 • 9am - 11am

📍 Denfeld • \$7*/person

Together we'll create a berry-topped vegan chocolate no-bake cheesecake. While the cakes are setting, we will create DIY Valentine's cards with the Duluth Art Institute. Recipe allergens include almonds and cashews.

A paid adult must accompany all children.

MARCH

Kids in the Kitchen featuring NEAC

Northern Expression Arts Collective

Saturday, March 7 • 9am - 11am

📍 Denfeld • \$7*/person

Learn to make a St. Patrick's Day favorite with our friends from Northern Expression Arts Collective. We'll also make a fun St. Patty's Day craft!

A paid adult must accompany all children.

Let's Make Pizza!

Jonathan Wolfe

Tuesday, March 10 • 5:30pm - 7:30pm

📍 Denfeld • \$15*

This hands-on class tackles every element of a truly homemade pie. Mix and knead your own versatile pizza dough from scratch. While it proofs, we'll simmer a zesty, 10-minute tomato sauce. Then you'll stretch your dough, add your sauce, and build your perfect pizza from a spread of fresh Co-op toppings. We'll bake them fresh and eat our delicious work at the end of class. You'll leave with the recipes and the confidence to make your own at home. Perfect for all skill levels!

More Information and Registration

*For paid classes, Owners will receive one \$5 Co-op gift card per owner account, unless otherwise noted.

Registration is required for all paid classes. Visit our online calendar for detailed descriptions and to register:

wholefoods.coop/classes

If you're interested in being a Co-op instructor or have class ideas, we'd love to hear from you. Email us:

marketing@wholefoods.coop



GROW LOCAL FOOD FUND

Grow Local Food Fund

GRANTS THAT STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

The 2025 Grow Local Food Fund (GLFF) recipients have been hard at work on their farms and in their facilities this year, growing and producing food for our region. In addition, they've been working on their GLFF-funded projects that are making their small businesses stronger, more productive, and more sustainable.

We caught up with the recipients to see how the funds have impacted their businesses and to learn more about their day-to-day. You can read more about the amazing work our 2025 recipients are doing at wholefoods.coop/GLFF.

Your round-up dollars at the register through GIVE! make this impact possible. Thank you for rounding up!

Are you interested in being a part of selecting the next round of grant recipients? We're looking for Owners to join the 2026 Grow Local Food Fund Selection Committee. To apply, go to wholefoods.coop/GLFF. Applications are open through January 21.

2026 Grow Local Food Fund Applications Are Now Open!

Calling farmers and food producers!

Grants of up to \$7,000 are available to help grow your business. The 2026 Grow Local Food Fund application is open Jan 1-31, 2026. Eligible farmers and food producers are invited to apply online for 2026 funding. To learn more and submit your application, scan the QR code or visit wholefoods.coop/GLFF



2025 GROW LOCAL FOOD FUND GRANT RECIPIENTS FOLLOW-UPS



Hoop Snake Farm

📍 Brule, WI

\$7,000 in grant funds to construct fencing and repair aging barn.

"Our barn is 125 years old this year. Many people have told me it's the oldest barn in Douglas County."

- Madeline



Native Wise

📍 Sawyer, MN

\$7,000 in grant funds to install new fencing for buffalo herd.

"Historically, wood bison would've been here, along with moose and caribou. It's about restoring what would've naturally existed."

- David



Silver Sage Farm & Flowers

📍 Port Wing, WI

\$7,000 in grant funds to automate ventilation for greenhouse.

"We can spend more time working on plants instead of running around opening and closing greenhouses."

- Heather



Rising Phoenix Community Farm

📍 Barnum, MN

\$2,067 in grant funds for equipment to expand greens production.

"We've spent so much time on our hands and knees with scissors, harvesting rows and rows of greens. It's time to make it easier on our bodies and more efficient for the farm."

- Heather Marie

Turner Road Farm

📍 Bayfield, WI

\$7,000 in grant funds to expand sheep and cow pastures with fencing.

"We're grateful for the support. It's not just about fencing—it's about building a system that works with nature, feeds people, and keeps our community strong."

- Josh

Drift Acres

📍 Poplar, WI

\$2,925 in grant funds to build a mobile turkey roost.

"Small grants are important for local businesses. This relatively small grant allowed us to do this big project."

- Justin

Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative

📍 Washburn, WI

\$7,000 in grant funds to expand freezer space for Chequamegon Bay Farms.

"I like working with local foods; it's a big community passion in this area. Local places are really important."

- Laura

Shalomba Farm

📍 Lake Nebagamon, WI

\$7,000 in grant funds to drill a well to nourish farm.

"We want to build a model that others can follow. Something sustainable, something community-driven."

- Singh

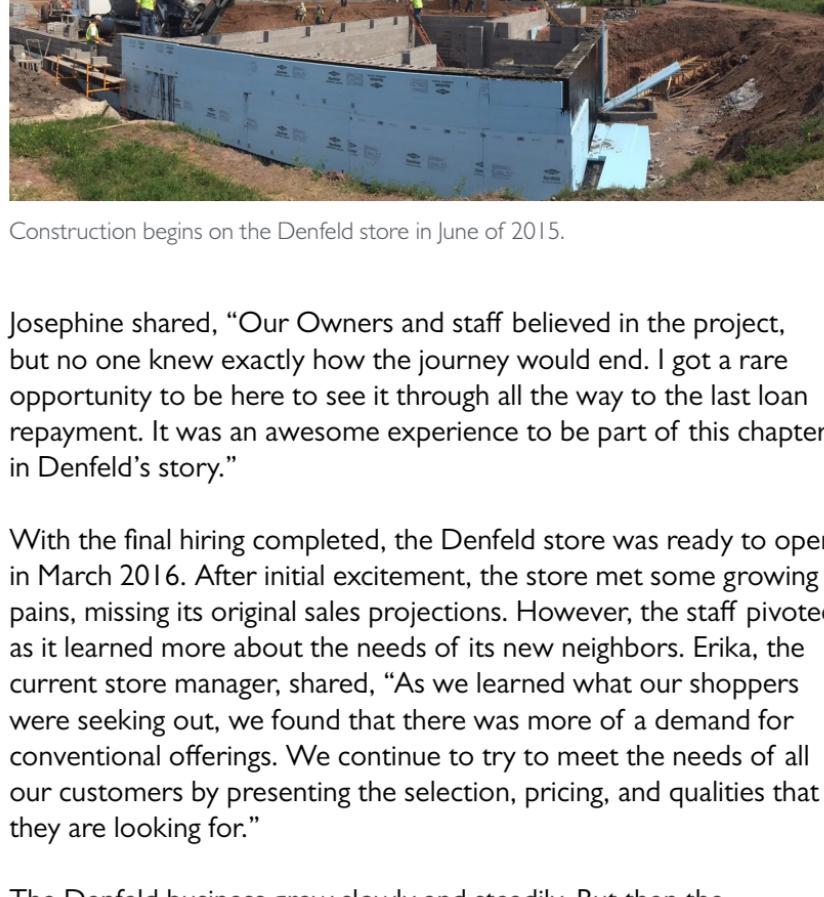
10 YEARS OF DENFELD!

A Decade in Denfeld

HOW WHOLE FOODS CO-OP DENFELD BECAME A COMMUNITY STAPLE

In the early 2010s, Whole Foods Co-op began planning an expansion in Duluth, aiming to increase access to nutritious and local food and strengthen the resilience of the regional food system.

Co-op leadership, including then-General Manager Sharon Murphy, recognized an opportunity to extend the cooperative model into a new area, including growing neighborhoods that had limited access to traditional grocery stores. The intention to expand was announced in the Duluth News Tribune in July 2013, and the community responded enthusiastically. In the 2013 Annual Report, Sharon noted that she received requests to add a store in neighborhoods across the region. She even fielded several "cheerful requests to put it 'by my house.'" The voices of the community were heard, and market assessment studies were conducted for several locations.



Groundbreaking at the Denfeld store in September 2014.

Various sites were considered, guided by concrete factors such as market reach, traffic patterns, building and parking capacity, and impact on the existing store, but also by cooperative values and principles. At that time, a vacant lot in the Denfeld neighborhood stood out as a good opportunity due to the area's limited options for groceries and the in-process redevelopment of Grand Avenue. Eventually, the board approved the selection of the second store's location, right across the street from Denfeld High School.

Building a new store is a costly endeavor. In 2013, the Board of Directors called upon the 7,500 Whole Foods Co-op Owners, who responded in a truly cooperative fashion. Owners provided over \$1.5 million in capital loans to the Co-op for the expansion, which accounted for about 20% of the total project development cost. Josephine, the current Finance Manager, processed the first Owner loan in 2013, and was present when the last of the Owners were repaid in 2023.

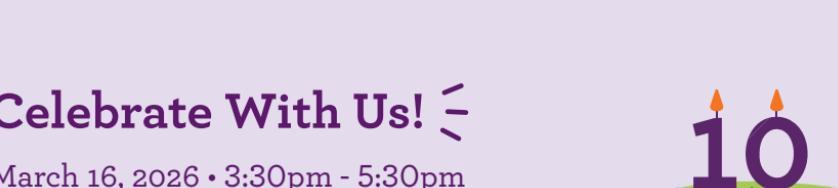


Construction begins on the Denfeld store in June of 2015.

Josephine shared, "Our Owners and staff believed in the project, but no one knew exactly how the journey would end. I got a rare opportunity to be here to see it through all the way to the last loan repayment. It was an awesome experience to be part of this chapter in Denfeld's story."

With the final hiring completed, the Denfeld store was ready to open in March 2016. After initial excitement, the store met some growing pains, missing its original sales projections. However, the staff pivoted as it learned more about the needs of its new neighbors. Erika, the current store manager, shared, "As we learned what our shoppers were seeking out, we found that there was more of a demand for conventional offerings. We continue to try to meet the needs of all our customers by presenting the selection, pricing, and qualities that they are looking for."

The Denfeld business grew slowly and steadily. But then the pandemic changed people's shopping patterns, to the benefit of the Co-op's second store.



Ribbon cutting event at the Denfeld store in 2016.

"The pandemic was a turning point for Denfeld because people were looking for ways to shop at the Co-op while having more space and fewer crowds," Sarah Hannigan, current Whole Foods Co-op General Manager, explained. "It introduced people to the new store, and then people kept coming after that." Since the pandemic, Denfeld's contribution to Whole Foods Co-op's consolidated sales has grown from about 25% to over 40%.

Whole Foods Co-op is grateful for how the Denfeld store expanded its ability to serve a wider community, both making it easier for people living in the neighborhood, Superior and surrounding area to access its offerings, but also for the positive impact the Co-op continues to have on the Denfeld neighborhood.

Whole Foods Co-op is involved in the West Duluth Business Club and is a regular at Spirit Valley Days. The Co-op is also proud to support the nonprofits in neighborhoods surrounding the store, including Northern Expressions Arts Collective, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northland, Ecolibrium3, and many others.

Art Wall at Denfeld.

What I Love About Denfeld is...

"In the last 10 years, I've met so many amazing people who care about our community, food stability, and each other. It's a joy to walk through the aisles and see the smiling faces of friends that I've gotten to know throughout the years."

—Christen H., Assistant Front End Manager

Celebrate With Us! —

March 16, 2026 • 3:30pm - 5:30pm

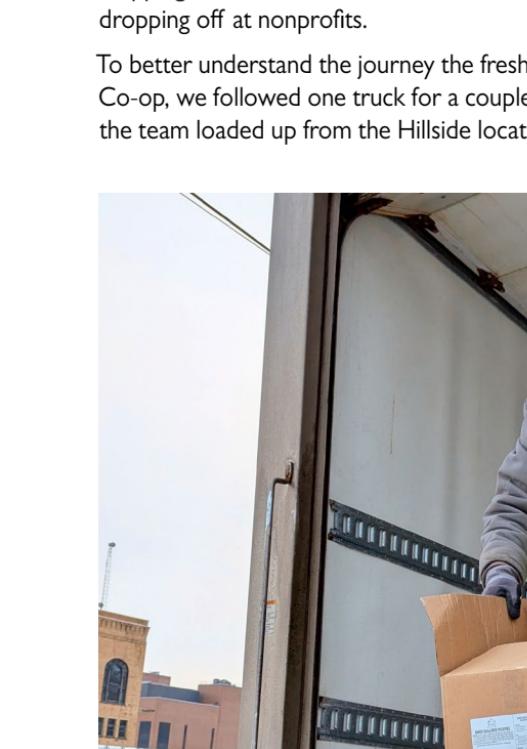
Celebrate 10 years of the Whole Food Co-op Denfeld store with us! Enjoy treats and beverages, and chances to win prizes!

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Local Food Rescue

In 2000, Second Harvest Northland received a call from Jean Gornick, the Executive Director of the Damiano Center. At the time, nonprofits with on-site meal programs, like the Damiano Center, would individually reach out to different grocery stores in the area to see if they had any surplus food that was still good to eat, but not sellable. Inversely, grocery stores would have to reach out to multiple nonprofits when they had a surplus. But Jean had a vision for a more efficient approach: a cohesive food rescue program.

"She thought that Second Harvest Northland could be a kind of collector/gatherer," explained Shaye Moris, President/CEO of Second Harvest Northland. "It directly aligned with our work serving as our region's only food bank." In 2003, Second Harvest Northland launched a new food rescue program that collected surplus food from grocery stores, restaurants, schools and the medical community and distributed it to their network of on-site meal programs across the Twin Ports.

Soon after, Whole Foods Co-op joined the route. Over twenty years later, the Second Harvest Northland truck pulls up to both the Hillside and Denfeld



"The food rescue program has been instrumental in our growth, and ability to feed more neighbors. A lot of the comments we hear is just the appreciation for fresh food."

-Shaye Moris, Second Harvest Northland

stores twice a week, loading up on fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat and baked goods, before heading to programs such as the Damiano Center, Chum, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northland, and the Salvation Army, where the food is distributed immediately to community members.

These deliveries are just a portion of the work the regional food bank Second Harvest Northland does. Food banks, like Second Harvest Northland, are aggregation centers, gathering and then distributing food throughout the region. Second Harvest Northland covers 15 counties in Northeastern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin, partnering with food shelves, on-site meal programs, and tribal organizations to support families, children and seniors.

The facility distributes almost 13 million pounds of product every year, which is about 11 million meals.

And the food rescue program has played a growing role in the food mix that the food bank distributes every year.

"Large food manufacturing has become very tech savvy. It used to be, back in the late 90's, that we'd see a lot of manufactured items like canned goods, the boxed products, etc.," said Shaye. "But with technology changing, there's a lot less surplus in the marketplace. So, we have set our sights on regional food rescue, which now makes up the biggest percentage of any other source of food for our region."

In fact, food rescue from local donors like Whole Foods Co-op makes up more than 40% of the food that Second Harvest Northland accesses and distributes.

Every weekday, Second Harvest Northland's trucks cover a different route, stopping at between 12-15 locations, both picking up from businesses and dropping off at nonprofits.

To better understand the journey the fresh food takes after leaving Whole Foods Co-op, we followed one truck for a couple of stops. On this particular morning, the team loaded up from the Hillside location.



Mark, a driver for Second Harvest Northland, unloads a box of food to Julie at Center City Housing.

Mark, who's been a driver for Second Harvest Northland for almost 15 years, greeted us with a smile and explained his process of providing an extra layer of quality control and weighing and recording the product. He then sets aside certain product in his truck that he anticipates the different nonprofits on his route will want. Then, we headed over to Chum.

"I've seen a lot of a lot of things throughout the years, and there's been a lot of what you call "Mission Moments," where you feel like you really are helping people in your community."

-Mark, Second Harvest Northland

At Chum, we were met by a group of employees and volunteers excited to help unload the product. The food is organized and then distributed throughout the week, both at Chum's food shelf and through pop-up locations throughout the community.

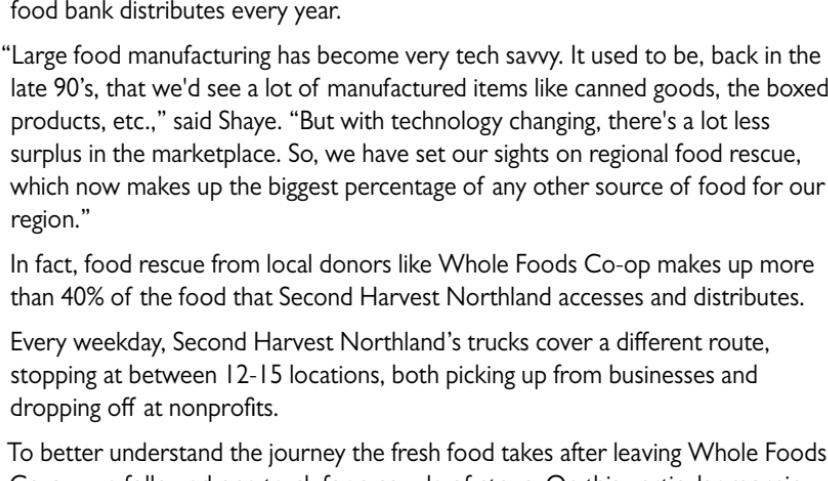
"Whether they're a family of one to a family of ten," said April, Chum's Director of Distributive Services of the services they provide, "we want to make sure that their needs are met and that we can do the best we can to make them feel comfortable."

The donations from the food rescue program help to compliment these efforts, allowing more people to have more access to fresh foods.

First, donated food is unpacked and organized. Then, the food will be distributed at pop-ups around the community, and at Chum's Hillside food shelf.

Julie's proud of the work she does and its community impact, fueled in part by the food rescue donations. "It's benefited a lot of people. A lot of homeless people and people down on their luck. That is really what matters."

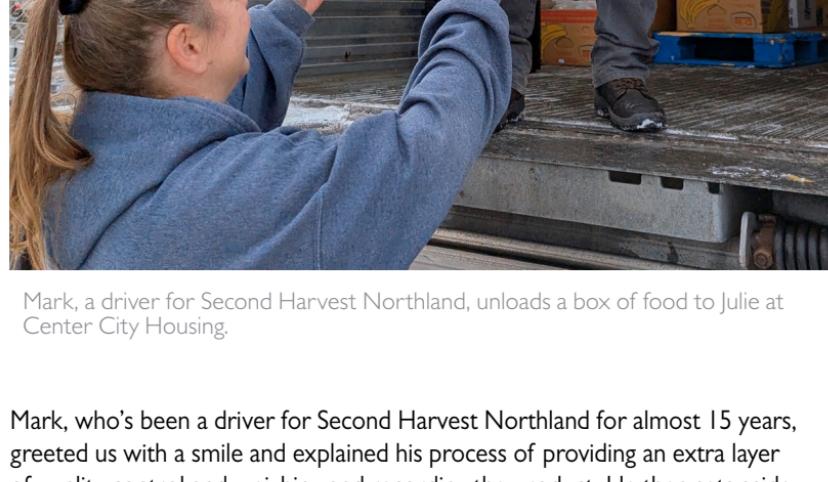
"We couldn't do our work without partners like Whole Foods Co-op," mentioned Shaye. But Second Harvest Northland's food rescue program would not be possible without community support. While the food rescue program is donated, Second Harvest Northland provides the transportation and labor to make this program a success, and donations support this critical infrastructure. To learn more about Second Harvest Northland and to support their efforts, go to secondharvestnorthland.org.



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WHOLE FOODS CO-OP

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